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55th plenary meeting
Friday, 10 November 1995, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Freitas do Amaral ..... (Portugal)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Agenda item 8 *(continued)*

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work: reports of the General Committee

Third report of the General Committee (A/50/250/Add.2)

The President: This morning, I draw the attention of representatives first to the third report of the General Committee concerning a request by the delegation of the Philippines for the inclusion in the agenda of an additional sub-item under agenda item 95, "Sustainable development and international economic cooperation", and a request by the Secretary-General for the inclusion of an additional sub-item under agenda item 17, "Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments".

In paragraph 1 of the report, the General Committee recommends to the Assembly that the sub-item entitled "Food and sustainable agricultural development" should be included in the agenda of the current session as a sub-item of agenda item 95, "Sustainable development and international economic cooperation".

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include this additional sub-item in the agenda of the current session?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Committee further decided to recommend to the Assembly that the additional sub-item be allocated to the Second Committee.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to allocate the additional sub-item to the Second Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: The Chairman of the Second Committee will be informed of the decision just taken.

In paragraph 2 of the report, the General Committee recommends to the Assembly that an additional sub-item entitled "Appointment of a member of the Joint Inspection Unit" should be included as a sub-item of agenda item 17, "Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments".

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include this additional sub-item in the agenda of the current session?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Committee further decided to recommend to the Assembly that the additional sub-item be considered directly in plenary meeting.

95-86600 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a *consolidated corrigendum*.

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May I take it that the General Assembly decides to consider this item directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 33

International assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Nicaragua: aftermath of the war and natural disasters

Report of the Secretary-General (A/50/535)

Draft resolution (A/50/L.18)

The President: I call on the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua, His Excellency Mr. Jose Bernard Pallais, to introduce draft resolution A/50/L.18.

Mr. Pallais (Nicaragua) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: On 17 November 1994 the General Assembly approved without a vote resolution 49/16, "International assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Nicaragua: aftermath of the war and natural disasters", thereby reiterating the will of the international community to continue supporting Nicaragua's efforts at rehabilitation, reconstruction, stabilization and national development.

We would like to thank the international community, the Support Group for Nicaragua and Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali for their valuable contribution to the democratization process and the economic and social development of our country.

We received with satisfaction document A/50/535, dated 10 October 1995, containing the Secretary-General's report pursuant to resolution 49/16 of the General Assembly on the item before the Assembly. The Secretary-General's report presents, in broad terms, the evolution of the Nicaraguan situation. His comments merit all our attention and commit us, as a Government, to make greater efforts to promote the improvement of the social life of our country in all areas.

In 1990 President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro's Government initiated the country's integral transition from authoritarianism to participatory democracy, from a centralized economy to a market economy, from poverty to development, from confrontation to social *rapprochement*, and from war to peace.

Five years later the country is gathering, with the tensions inherent in this difficult transition, the fruits of the end of armed conflict, of national reconciliation and of macroeconomic stability.

Violence with a political motive has not occurred in any significant way since 1993, according to the fourth report of the Tripartite Commission established by the President of the Republic on 2 October 1992 for the study and analysis of post-war violence in Nicaragua with the participation of the Government, the Catholic Church and the International Support and Verification Commission of the Organization of American States. The report was made public on 12 September last.

The application of preventive measures of economic and social support to demobilized members of the former Nicaraguan resistance and the Nicaraguan Army, in addition to action to maintain civil security, were a decisive influence in the creation of a climate of peace and work in rural areas in our country.

Post-war violence is today a residual phenomenon on the way to extinction. The principal challenge that we face is to sustain the gains made and to promote, as widely and deeply as possible, a spirit of national solidarity that will allow us to successfully tackle extreme poverty and the risk of social breakdown that it generates.

We have actively undertaken to develop educational programmes on human rights; the establishment of a network of human rights promoters shows that civil society has embraced this desire for reconciliation.

The Government of Nicaragua, prompted by the vocation of peace of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), has requested that organization's support for its programme for a culture of peace, based on the universal values of respect for life, liberty, justice, solidarity and tolerance. We are certain that UNESCO's resolute support will be immensely beneficial to Nicaraguan society.

Dialogue and national understanding have become regular choices for the solution of the country's problems in every sphere. The representative and participatory democratic model has been enriched, contributing to overcoming substantial political and social tensions characteristic of the establishment of a state of law and the perfecting of democratic institutions, through

economic and social harmonization and the constant search for a political consensus.

On 4 July 1995, as the culmination of a long period of national debate between the executive and legislative organs of the Government, the political parties and civil society, the reforms approved to the 1987 political Constitution were published through the promulgation of a framework law which for the first time in our history establishes the mechanisms for a real commitment to democratic governability.

Likewise, on 21 February 1995, the first transfer of command of the Nicaraguan Army to a military commander appointed by a civil authority took place — an historic event that confirmed the process of institutionalization and modernization of the armed forces of Nicaragua and their full subordination to a democratic Government.

Furthermore, on 5 July of this year the Conference on Property co-sponsored by the Carter Center and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was held. The complex issue of the problem of property has given rise to passionate public debates and continues to constitute a particular difficulty that requires urgent solution, since it affects very sensitive areas of economic, social and institutional development in Nicaragua.

The processes that have been observed during the past few months point to an equitable solution for all sectors with an interest in the property question. The National Assembly has begun to debate a property bill that, on the basis of a broad consensus, once passed, would constitute a viable solution to this very delicate matter, confirming social reform, correcting abuses and allowing for fair compensation for those affected.

Because of our own special circumstances, and despite the progress made in the transition, Nicaragua has not been able to progress as rapidly as we would wish in all directions. Macroeconomic and social objectives are dependent on ample and sustained financing and external cooperation in the medium and long term.

The country's foreign debt continues to be an excessive burden on any equitable development programme. While measures have been taken to cushion the impact of the measures of structural adjustment that have been applied, it is the most vulnerable sectors of the population – women, children, the elderly and the handicapped — that have borne the brunt of the necessary restrictions. This increases social tensions; on some occasions, it leads to demands by the affected sectors for better services in the areas of education, health care, food and employment.

The renegotiation of Nicaragua's debt has relied on the understanding of the international community, which has undertaken to continue its assistance in the exceptional conditions in which we are still living. Most creditor nations have agreed to substantial reductions in the debt burden. The Government has made considerable progress in negotiations on the commercial debt, which totals $1,700 million. At present, 79 per cent of the debt holders have so far accepted Nicaragua's buy-back offer with the support of the international financial organizations and a group of friendly countries. The Consultative Group for Nicaragua, meeting in Paris in June of this year, confirmed its support for the transition process with promises of contributions for 1995-1997, with the objective of reducing the deficit in the balance of payments over the next three years. However, the country needs to renegotiate the remaining debt with flexible criteria and substantive reductions.

The experience of our integral transition, to which I referred at the beginning of my statement, is an example of the fact that the consolidation of peace after a conflict should be linked to global development efforts.

Natural disasters continue to befall our country. This season's tropical depressions have caused levels of rain that have resulted in flooding in nearly all of the national territory. This has endangered the life of entire communities and has destroyed basic grain crops, such as corn and beans — the basic diet of the majority of the population. It has also caused deterioration of the main means of communication.

To this already critical situation has been added the breakout of an epidemic of a type of hemorrhagic fever that has already taken many human lives and is endangering the health of hundreds of people in the western part of our country and in other central departments.

These circumstances obviously undermine the efforts the country has undertaken to overcome the consequences of the war within a framework of democracy and macroeconomic stabilization. For this reason, Nicaragua continues to need the international community's understanding and support.

We have the satisfaction of knowing that pacification in the country and the economic measures applied over the past few years have put Nicaragua on the road to sustainable development, that there have been more-than-significant gains in building lasting democratic institutions, that the modernization of the State means greater transparency in the management of public matters and better conditions for practising good government, that, with the scarce resources available to us, the population is benefiting in some spheres. This certainly constitutes progress. But we are also certain that the problems and the difficulties, due to their size and complexity, will subsist in the coming years. We cannot think of going back; rather, we must move forward.

The Secretary-General's report points out that

> "the main threat to democratic governance lies not in political conflict, but in the difficulty of the conditions of life and the subsequent loss of faith in democracy and its institutions". *(A/50/535, para 13)*

This potential threat must be overcome by wisdom, political intelligence, a united national effort and international cooperation.

Dedication to productive work that could substantially raise the standard of living of Nicaraguans and achieve the great national objectives is not limited to the term of office of a particular Government. In 1996 general elections will be held, and the country is preparing for a new stage, in which, for the first time, a democratically elected, civilian President will hand over power to another civilian elected in a process as open and honest as that of 1990. The new authorities must continue to promote national development, with the participation of all the sectors, a sense of social justice, reconciliation and adherence to the law and the vision of a better future for all Nicaraguans. With this, we will be successfully completing the first stage of the democratic transition in Nicaragua.

We have already made a request to the Secretary-General that the United Nations observe the 1996 electoral process. We are also calling upon the international community to lend its political and financial support to this process, so that it will end successfully in democracy and peace.

Today, on behalf of the co-sponsors, I wish to present for consideration by Members of the Assembly, draft resolution A/50/L.18, entitled "International assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Nicaragua: aftermath of the war and natural disasters". This draft resolution is similar in content to resolution 49/16, adopted by the Assembly on 17 November 1994. It has simply been brought up to date in the light of the events and circumstances of our transition. I urge that this draft resolution be adopted unanimously.

In conclusion, allow me to state that Nicaragua gratefully acknowledges the ample and effective response of the United Nations system and of the international community in mobilizing resources necessary to our institutional, economic and social development. That contribution consolidates the advances made in the democratic arena and makes a life of freedom the path to justice and peace for all Nicaraguans.

Mr. Maruyama (Japan) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: For four years now, the General Assembly has taken up the important subject of international assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Nicaragua. During that time, the Government of Nicaragua has made substantial progress, under extremely difficult circumstances, in the areas of national reconciliation, macroeconomic stabilization, consolidation of democracy and reorganization of civil society.

In the political field, we have witnessed the process of transition strengthened through the demobilization of more than 20,000 members of the Nicaraguan Resistance, which today participates in the national debate as a political party. Each step taken towards the consolidation of civilian control over the military is one more step towards justice and democratic freedom. Nicaragua is, therefore, to be commended for reducing the National Army from 98,000 to 15,700, rendering it today the smallest in Central America. The country now enjoys a level of political freedom and democracy greater than at any moment in its history, an achievement highlighted by the promulgation of the constitutional reforms by President de Chamorro on 4 July this year. It is, therefore, our sincere hope that the elections scheduled to be held in October next year under the newly reformed Constitution will be conducted in a democratic and fair manner. In the economic field, the framework of a market economy having been put in place, the country now enjoys much lower inflation and the highest economic growth rate in 15 years.

It is only through strenuous effort and unshakable determination that the Government and people of Nicaragua have been able to make this progress, and, on behalf of my delegation and the Government of Japan, I

wish to take this opportunity to once again, pledge our continued support.

In accordance with its principles of official development assistance, Japan has substantially increased its assistance to Nicaragua in recent years, with a view to supporting its efforts to achieve democratization and economic reform. That assistance has been directed in particular to improving the balance of payments, meeting basic human needs and promoting human-resources development. Japanese official aid to Nicaragua, including yen loans, grants and technical cooperation, totalled $207.7 million for the period 1990 to 1994.

At the end of last year, a high-level Japanese mission for economic and technical cooperation visited Nicaragua, and as a result of the subsequent agreement Japan now intends to provide Nicaragua with economic and technical assistance, with particular emphasis on activities in such areas as social development, eradicating poverty, improving socio-economic infrastructure, conserving the environment, promoting the democratization process and enhancing economic stability.

Although, as I have already said, the Government of Nicaragua, headed by President Chamorro, has made substantial achievements, it continues to face serious difficulties as it strives for economic recovery, macroeconomic stabilization and improvements in infrastructure and in efforts to eliminate poverty. I believe the Government and the people of Nicaragua need and deserve the continuing assistance of donor countries and the international community as a whole as they pursue the full attainment of those objectives. For its part, the Government of Japan will do its utmost to ensure that Nicaragua is successful in its struggle to achieve a better life for its people.

Mr. Ferrarin (Italy): Italy wishes to express its appreciation for the Secretary-General's report (A/50/535) entitled "International assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Nicaragua: aftermath of the war and natural disasters".

Since the end of the civil war, the people and the Government of Nicaragua have made great efforts to rebuild civil society and to move the country towards a peaceful life and economic and social prosperity.

The transition process was a challenge for the Government of National Reconciliation: it was necessary to re-establish democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, foster a market economy and eradicate poverty.

We are very pleased to note that Nicaragua has made important achievements in this process. Pacification appears to have been consolidated, and the economic policies for stabilization are producing solid results in the inflation rate and economic growth.

Allow me to mention that Italy has also decided to manifest once again its friendship and solidarity with the Government and the people of Nicaragua, with whom we share strong Latin ties, by granting a unilateral debt reduction in addition to the one agreed to by the Paris Club in March 1995.

My country contributed very actively and significantly to the peace process in Central America and Nicaragua through $115 million in funding for, and the implementation of, the Development Programme for Displaced Persons, Refugees and Returnees (PRODERE). Through PRODERE Italy contributed to the resettlement of 350,000 displaced persons and refugees in Nicaragua. PRODERE completed its activities in June 1995, but the sustainability of the programme, as stressed in the Secretary-General's report, has been assured through its transfer to local development agencies.

Let me recall that the external evaluation mission, led by Nobel laureate Oscar Arias, has proved that PRODERE improved the situation regarding the basic material needs of the affected population and restored civil society's faith in its rights and its role in the decision-making process.

Even since the end of PRODERE's operations, the Italian involvement in Central America has not come to an end. Continuing its assistance in Nicaragua's efforts for development, Italy recently decided to finance and implement, through the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), a project costing $1.8 million to improve local health facilities in Nueva Segovia and Jinotega for women, children and vulnerable sectors of society.

In order to alleviate the population's suffering caused by the drought, last January Italy also approved a food-aid contribution of $1.3 million to Nicaragua.

In conclusion, Italy wishes to take this opportunity to confirm once again its unwavering political support for Nicaragua through bilateral and multilateral channels.

Mr. Albín (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I wish first to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/50/535) entitled "International assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Nicaragua: aftermath of the war and natural disasters". The report describes the activities carried out by the United Nations system to help the Republic of Nicaragua.

Central America's enormous efforts of recent years have demonstrated the region's indomitable will to leave behind the years of violence and political, economic and social instability. The support of the entire international community has been required in this difficult stage.

Nicaragua has gone through an intensive political process aimed at national reconciliation, pacification, reducing the size of the army and demobilizing the resistance. Recognizing the difficulty and importance of these efforts, we wish to reiterate our will to continue to cooperate with Nicaragua in order to move ahead on the road of peace and economic and social development.

As we have said on various occasions, peace is an integral progress that includes both the absence of war and the eradication of its underlying causes, which arise out of social inequalities and a lack of development.

My delegation notes with great satisfaction the significant progress made in the Nicaraguan peace process. According to the Secretary-General's report this year,

> "for the first time there are no politically motivated armed groups in Nicaragua". (*A/50/535, para. 6*)

Also,

> "More than 20,000 members of the Nicaraguan Resistance have been demobilized and the army has been reduced from 92,000 combatants to 12,500, the smallest in Central America". (*ibid.*)

Despite the relatively positive macroeconomic indicators, as the report mentions, Nicaragua's economic and social situation is still fragile. The growth in gross domestic product in 1994 did not translate into an improvement in per capita income because of population growth of 3.7 per cent, the highest in the American continent. Since 1990, per capita income has declined by some 10 per cent, and the unemployment rate in 1995 is running at 20.2 per cent of the economically active population, with underemployment at 33.7 per cent.

This situation shows that there are still major issues outstanding that deserve resolute and continued support from the international community.

Mexico, despite an adverse financial climate, has kept up its level of development assistance to Nicaragua. To mention just some sectors, my country has provided training and consultancy services for agriculture, health, fuel and power, social development, the environment, fisheries, tourism, transport and communications, and public administration.

With a view to promoting trade with Nicaragua, we are negotiating a free trade treaty, on which work is already at the final stage. We are confident that negotiations will have been concluded, at the latest, by this year end.

We should like to conclude by appealing to the international community, and especially on the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Inter-American Development Bank, to continue efforts aimed at achieving and consolidating Nicaragua's economic and social development. Their support is needed to ensure that political, economic and social institutions are consolidated and that the foundations are laid for sustained economic growth and sustainable development.

We call on the General Assembly once again to give proof of its support for Nicaragua by adopting the draft resolution we have before us, when the time comes, by consensus.

Mr. Yáñez-Barnuevo (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): In considering the item on "International assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Nicaragua: aftermath of the war and natural disasters", we have to begin by recognizing the major efforts the Nicaraguans have made over the last 12 months to ensure that tolerance, dialogue and peace emerge as victors.

At the same time as peace in Nicaragua was being consolidated, structural reform measures had to be instituted in the economic and social sectors and a start had to be made on the institutional rebuilding of the country. Thus we have a complex process of transition that has to have resolute support from the international community, and the United Nations in particular.

As the Secretary-General says in his report to the Assembly this year (A/50/535), last year saw

> "notable progress in the areas of reconciliation, macroeconomic stabilization, the consolidation of democracy and the organization of civil society". (*A/50/535, para. 5*)

Here we should like to commend the action taken by the President of Nicaragua, Mrs. Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, with support and cooperation from Nicaragua's political and social forces.

At the same time, however, the continuing deterioration in the social situation in Nicaragua could still jeopardize the progress made in other areas. Now that the promotion of economic and social progress is continuing and finishing off the work of building the peace, the international community must continue, through its support for Nicaragua's rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts, to provide assistance for overcoming all the aftermath of the armed conflict and fully consolidating the country's stability and development. When the necessary internal conditions exist for the processes of development to bear fruit, international assistance shortens the time needed to extend its effects to the whole population and helps ensure that the objectives of progress are reached while maintaining the greatest possible social cohesion.

Nicaragua has occupied a very special position in Spain's activities abroad over the last few years. Spain has had very close links with Nicaragua in that country's quest for peace, and maintains those links now in building Nicaragua's progress, both through our own, national efforts and within the European Union framework.

Over the past year, the Support Group — Canada, Mexico, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden — continued its work. The Group, in close collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) office in Nicaragua, is attentively following the transition process and is trying to facilitate both consensus-building and the merging of efforts in order to promote Nicaragua's reconstruction and development.

Spain's bilateral cooperation has in addition sought to provide unwavering support to Nicaragua's efforts to achieve progress and prosperity for its people. A large number of programmes established by the Nicaraguan authorities in sectors such as education and training, health, civil administration, urban infrastructure and environmental protection have had funding from Spain. We have also made significant contributions in terms of food aid.

In addition to taking part in the agreements arranged through the Paris Club to achieve a substantial reduction in Nicaragua's foreign debt, Spain has cancelled a large part of Nicaragua's bilateral debt to it, as indicated in the Secretary-General's report.

On 23 October, as the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations was being celebrated, the Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs signed an agreement with the Administrator of UNDP with a view to setting up a Trust Fund, with an initial contribution of $11 million from Spain, to fund programmes that help to strengthen governability in Central America. The fund will also benefit Nicaragua in this crucial phase of its efforts to establish peace and democracy and to promote economic and social development.

For all these reasons Spain urges the Secretary-General and the United Nations system to continue to provide Nicaragua with support and assistance, with a view to consolidating peace and securing the democratic reconstruction and development of the country.

My country was a co-sponsor of the draft resolution submitted under this item at the last session of the General Assembly, and we hope that, following consultations with delegations, the draft resolution contained in document A/50/L.18 will also be adopted by consensus by the General Assembly.

Mr. Henze (Germany) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Germany fully supports the draft resolution on international assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Nicaragua. For us, this is not merely a text on paper but an expression of a policy that we ourselves have promoted for many years.

Nicaragua has found peace, following years of internal conflict, and is successfully attempting to strengthen democracy and improve its economy. Today, all essential matters are being discussed in Parliament, and debate is translated into action through democratic channels. Democracy and the rule of law have been accepted by the population in an unprecedented manner, notwithstanding a few remaining problems. Obviously, the aftermath of the conflict — which, happily, is over — still weighs heavily on the country, and the situation has been further aggravated by natural disasters.

Nicaragua deserves firm support from the international community for its courageous efforts, which require significant sacrifices from the population.

Germany, as the third-largest bilateral donor country, has the honour of being in the forefront of international cooperation for Nicaragua's development. I recall with pleasure the day when President de Chamorro took office. At that time I had the first talks with the then Foreign Minister on the question of an agreement to provide Nicaragua with the financial means that it urgently needed to set itself on a course of reconstruction.

As a first step, large sums were made available to Nicaragua for emergency measures. Today, extensive bilateral cooperation for development focuses primarily on the consolidation of the structural-adjustment process; rehabilitation of the social infrastructure; and promotion of the private-sector economy, including professional training, agricultural development and the protection of natural resources.

Another issue of importance to us is the advancement of women. Our cooperation is focused increasingly on rural areas. Germany's commitments for official development aid to Nicaragua total to date approximately 800 million Deutsche Marks — or $570 million. New allocations in the amount of approximately $40 million have been made this year.

One of the consequences of the past is the extremely heavy external debt burden, which makes the country's economic revival extremely difficult. In this context, I particularly welcome the fact that the recent German-Nicaraguan negotiations on the rescheduling of the debt have resulted in an overall, flexible solution that remains within the parameters of the solution agreed with international financial institutions. The agreement in question covers debts of more than 1 billion Deutsche Marks — around $820 million — consisting mostly of sums owed to the former German Democratic Republic. The agreement envisages also the liquidation of debts through the application of environmental-protection measures. Consequently, Nicaragua's debt to Germany has been reduced by some 80 per cent — that is, beyond the 77 per cent agreed upon in the international context. We hope that other countries that are creditors of Nicaragua will follow our example.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I should like to inform members that action on draft resolution A/50/L.18 will be taken at a later date, to be announced.

Agenda item 41

Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Report of the Secretary-General (A/50/332 and Corr.1)

Draft resolution (A/50/L.19)

The President: I call on the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua, His Excellency Mr. José Bernard Pallais, to introduce draft resolution A/50/L.19.

Mr. Pallais (Nicaragua) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The First International Conference of New or Restored Democracies was held in Manila in June 1988, and 13 countries participated. The Second Conference was held in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean — in Managua — and 77 States, participants and observers, were present. The Third Conference will be held in Europe in 1996, and we hope that on that occasion there will be even more participants.

The main objective of the First and Second International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies, which took place in the Philippines and in Nicaragua respectively, was not just to reaffirm the extreme importance and effectiveness of representative democracy as a system of government — through a wide examination of the question of governance in new democracies: its successes, its weaknesses, its prospects and challenges within the new international context — but also to create greater awareness in the international community of the complexity of these processes, which require the international community's attention and support, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, to strengthen the maintenance of peace and international security and economic and social development.

In that light, those who participated in the Manila and Managua Conferences took the initiative of requesting the Secretary-General, through the General Assembly, to study the ways and mechanisms in which the United Nations system could support the efforts to promote and consolidate democracies. Without a doubt, the Secretary-General's report and the discussion thereon in the General Assembly will make an important contribution to the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, to be held in Romania in 1996,

at which important issues requiring reflection and action will be taken up once again.

The Secretary-General's report on this item distributed at this session of the General Assembly explains that

> "The United Nations system, in assisting and supporting the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies, does not endorse or promote any specific form of government". *(A/50/332, para. 5)*

The Secretary-General went on to state that

> "By democratization, I mean a process by which an authoritarian society becomes increasingly participatory through such mechanisms as periodic elections to representative bodies, the accountability of public officials, a transparent public administration, an independent judiciary and a free press". *(ibid, para. 6)*

We agree that democracy is not, and cannot be, an end in itself. It must not only resolve a society's fundamental problems but also promote the full development of the whole individual, with a strong emphasis on economic and social development, social justice and the necessary participation of all citizens in building a civil, pluralistic and participatory society.

As is made clear in the report, this objective can be achieved only in steps. The pace at which democratization moves forward inevitably depends on a series of political, economic, social and cultural factors, some of which, in some societies, perhaps do not lend themselves to rapid change. Democracy is a process requiring constant and tireless work, but to date it is the form of government that best meets the requirements of peoples and most adequately facilitates their potential for development. This is a concept that is constantly changing and is in full evolution as a result of the demands of politics and of history.

We are fully aware that the transition to democracy is not easy; Nicaragua is a case in point. This transition requires not only a commitment on the part of political leaders but also, and more important, the unwavering support and cooperation of the people. Democracy demands of itself that it at all times demonstrate that it is the best form of government and that it provides the greatest benefits to all members of society as a whole.

On this point, we are convinced that economic and social development are more likely to flourish in a democracy based on the rule of law than in a dictatorship, in which political and economic decisions cannot be criticized by a parliament, by a free press or by any member of society.

Strengthening democratic structures worldwide is the very essence of the work being carried out through the cooperation of the United Nations system. The pioneering role played in Nicaragua by the United Nations Observer Mission entrusted with verifying the electoral process, and in other countries through various initiatives, is clearly shown in the aforementioned report of the Secretary-General.

The Managua Plan of Action expressed the need to build and to strengthen modalities for international cooperation at the bilateral and multilateral levels that would be adapted to the differing realities of new or restored democracies, in order to strengthen democracy and peace with development. There is without a doubt a fundamental and special relationship between the promotion of democracy, sustainable development and peace.

We believe that democracy must be promoted and achieved on the basis of respect for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and strict observance of commitments undertaken by Governments in various international instruments, in particular in the field of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and in the realization of the right to development, which guarantees the full exercise of democracy.

The task of promoting and consolidating democracy cannot be undertaken by any Government alone. The participation of the civil society of each State is required, as is an international environment of cooperation and peace. Democracy can be achieved only when efforts are made to guarantee political pluralism, freedom of expression, economic consolidation, social development, dialogue, tolerance, reconciliation and full respect for individual and collective freedoms.

As the Secretary-General has pointed in his report, elections are necessary, but not sufficient, to guarantee a lasting democratization process. To meet the challenges posed by democracy and its implementation, the Secretary-General recommends in his report that

"the Secretariat and all agencies increase their cooperation in the area of institution-building and governance, in particular through strengthening capacity-building of democratic institutions". *(ibid., para. 127)*

In supporting this democratization process, different components of the United Nations system should pay particular attention to such key areas as the strengthening of leadership skills and public institutions; support for effective judiciaries that guarantee the rule of law and the protection of fundamental rights; the strengthening of links between government and civil society through non-governmental organizations, the media, local governments and professional associations; and participation in the decentralization process.

On behalf of the new or restored democracies, we reaffirm that the tenets of the Managua Declaration should be reiterated, as the conceptual framework for the support initiatives undertaken by the United Nations system.

In this respect, it must be emphasized that a solid democratic and pluralistic system, based on the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in the covenants and international conventions on human rights, is closely linked to the implementation of policies aimed at promoting sustainable development, improving the standard of living of the lowest-income segments of society, and promoting civil and political freedoms and equality of opportunities.

We need to recall that development — a fundamental right of nations — promotes the full exercise of democracy.

We must not forget that economic-reform and structural- adjustment programmes disconnected from social realities can destabilize democratic-transition processes and fuel political and social tensions. We have focused on the need to promote economic reforms that will ensure a social-security system for the most vulnerable, low-income groups in order to eradicate poverty.

In particular, we would like to suggest that the Secretary-General continue to reflect on this item and that, in the report he will be preparing, he should emphasize, *inter alia*, the following aspects: first, the measures that can be taken to encourage Governments to commit themselves to eradicating poverty, in the knowledge that eliminating poverty means defending democracy because political credibility will be undermined if people's standards of living are not improved; secondly, ways to encourage the drafting of a comprehensive proposal that includes criteria and modalities for international cooperation with new or restored democracies, with particular emphasis on a flexible approach to external debt, mechanisms for promoting investment, concessional flows of resources, and open-trade policies; thirdly, ways of supporting initiatives taken in various United Nations organs and bodies to strengthen democratization processes, peacemaking and economic and social development; and fourthly, ways also to promote the principle of the peaceful settlement of conflicts both among new or restored democracies and with other members of the international community.

We need to emphasize that the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions should promote greater awareness of the real difficulties and obstacles facing new or restored democracies, particularly in the least developed countries, and of the danger that structural-adjustment programmes that disregard the social impact and the specific characteristics of transition may undermine the consolidation of democratic processes.

The United Nations has vast experience in activities for peace and development. Initiatives in areas such as decolonization, the environment, sustainable development, population, the eradication of disease, disarmament and the development of international law, and in a host of other areas, have made an enormous contribution to strengthening the foundations of a peaceful world.

Once again, we welcome the vision of the Secretary-General, who has included democracy among the five pillars of development and sees it as the major task facing the international community and the greatest challenge for our Organization.

We believe that the United Nations has a role to play alongside countries which, in all sovereignty, have committed themselves to democratic processes. The transition to democracy is part of the new international order, and the United Nations system must respond to the obvious aspirations of peoples and Governments, which are prompting them to contribute to world peace.

At the Conferences in Manila and Managua, we laid the bases for the promotion and consolidation of new or restored democracies. That endeavour will continue at the Bucharest Conference. Over one third of the Member States of our Organization took part in the Manila and

Managua Conferences. Our experience and aspirations deserve serious thought and the implementation of a new United Nations programme designed primarily to strengthen democracy and democratic institutions. This idea can draw on the contributions and experience of the forum of new or restored democracies, the Secretariat and interested States in order to meet this universal challenge for good governance for future generations.

Allow me now to highlight some essential aspects of the draft resolution submitted by Nicaragua on behalf of the co-sponsors. It is contained in document A/50/L.19 and is entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies".

The preamble once again reaffirms the importance of the Managua Declaration and the implementation of the Plan of Action adopted at the Second International Conference of New or Restored Democracies as Set Out in resolution 49/30. Particular emphasis is placed on the fact that the international community must, as a matter of urgency, pay closer attention to the obstacles facing the new or restored democracies. It is noted that throughout all continents of the world a considerable number of societies have recently initiated bold, profound and daring attempts to achieve their social, political and economic objectives through democratization.

The draft resolution commends the work of the Secretary-General and through him the United Nations system for the activities undertaken at the request of Member States to support the efforts to consolidate democracy. It recognizes that our Organization has an important role to play in providing timely, adequate and mutually reinforcing support to the efforts of Governments to achieve democratization within the context of the realities and limits of their development efforts.

Similarly, the Secretary-General is encouraged to continue to optimize the capacity of the Organization to respond effectively to the requests of Member States for the provision of coordinated cooperation and assistance necessary in this field. The Secretary-General is also requested to submit a report to the General Assembly, at its fifty-first session, on the implementation of the present resolution, including innovative ways and means to enable the Organization to support the efforts of Governments and to respond effectively and in an integrated manner to requests of Member States.

Finally, under the draft resolution the General Assembly would decide to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-first session an item entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies".

Nicaragua, acting as secretariat of the Conference for the time being, and speaking now on behalf of the co-sponsors, trusts that this draft resolution will be adopted unanimously by the General Assembly.

In conclusion, I wish to say that the spirit of the next century can already be felt, and as the next millennium dawns our world continues to face critical global problems which we feel can be alleviated through the implementation of a three-pronged approach which the United Nations of the future will have to take into account. This three-pronged approach is expressed in the implementation of the Agenda for Peace, the Agenda for Development and an agenda for democracy whose links and interdependence are a fundamental element of the new world order we hope to build.

Mr. Mukasa-Ssali (Uganda): My delegation expresses its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report contained in document A/50/332 and Add.1. In particular, my delegation shares the view that democracy is not a model to be copied from certain States, but a goal to be attained by all States and peoples in accordance with different circumstances and peculiarities. What therefore should count, in the final analysis, is that there is peace and security, national unity and a culture of tolerance, freedom of political participation and good governance, and that these are all based on the principles of respect for human rights and dignity.

Numerous plans and programmes have been adopted by individual Governments and the United Nations system with the express intention of providing greater support for a democratic culture world wide. The achievements in this area are today being felt, due particularly to the general distaste for dictatorships and to the desire of Governments to end internal conflicts and lay a solid foundation for peace, stability and development in their countries.

The international community and the United Nations should therefore build on this atmosphere and what has been achieved so far. Foremost, where democratization has begun unfolding, there is need for increased and strengthened support in such vital areas as civic

education, constitution-making and electoral assistance, as well as in the building of democratic institutions and the launching of programmes to promote national unity, especially through the politics of inclusion and a culture of tolerance among the various segments of a given country. In any case, people should be the centre and object of democracy. To this end, any support should involve the people in the conception, implementation and monitoring of democratic processes. Special attention should be paid to the full involvement of women and youth in the evolution of political order.

The areas I have enumerated and related areas are necessary, but not sufficient. A strong institutional framework that addresses such issues as development should be targeted for democracy to take root. Support and assistance should not end at the holding of free and fair elections. Experience shows that weak economies only manage to sustain democracy at a very high cost — often at the cost of development. Moreover, it is acknowledged that without democracy and peace, development is not possible and that, conversely, without development, peace and democracy cannot be durable. Therefore, efforts that entail the enhancement and promotion of socio-economic development are crucial during democratic processes and in their aftermath. In this respect, the United Nations development system should be further strengthened and supported to respond effectively to the needs of development and democratic sustenance. The United Nations itself should be accorded the necessary financial resources to successfully fulfil all its mandated activities in these areas.

The whole question of democratization makes it difficult for the United Nations system alone to support the entire spectrum of programmes in the area. The cooperation of Governments at bilateral and regional levels, as well as the support of financial institutions and non-governmental organizations, will continue to play a significant role. In the continuum of activities, however, coordination is of the essence.

May I add that Uganda joins in sponsoring draft resolution A/50/L.19.

The President: Before calling on the representative of Latvia, I should like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate on this item be closed today at noon.

I hear no objection.

It was so decided.

The President: I therefore request those representatives wishing to participate in the debate to inscribe their names as soon as possible.

Mr. Baumanis (Latvia): The birth, nurturing and growth of democracy is a long and complex process. One of the most fundamental principles which describe a totalitarian regime and communist ideology is "If he is not with us, he is against us". The aggressiveness of this ideology enslaved Latvia for 50 years. Now this is changing, step by step, in order to reflect the required openness and understanding into which all social and governmental structures are integrated.

Just over four years ago independence and democracy were re-established in Latvia. We are proud that our independence was achieved democratically and without bloodshed. We are grateful to the friendly democratic Governments which supported us.

Latvia, through its free and fair election of a pluralist Parliament, has established a sound basis for a democratic political and institutional system. We shall continue our efforts to strengthen political, judicial and legal institutions based on the rule of law and respect for human rights. We are striving to establish well-trained and well-equipped public services and administrations for the efficient and effective implementation of new legislation and regulations. In addition, we are undertaking coherent reform of our legal system in order to set up a stable, legal and institutional framework indispensable for the smooth functioning of a market economy.

The latter — reform of the legal system — is a priority for Latvia. While, traditionally, the existence of the rule of law has been based on the division of power between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary, the independence of the judiciary is a concept that was unknown in the former Soviet Union, where the courts and lawyers were used as repressive instruments of the State. Thus, establishing the independence of the courts, subjecting executive, legislative and administrative acts to the review of the court and ensuring respect for the decisions of the courts is a priority for Latvia.

The necessary process of transition to a market economy is, like any other revolutionary change,

occurring concurrently with other complex developments. Privatization, policies supporting investment, and effective tax structures are mechanisms which will enable us, in the near future, to revive and secure our national economy.

Much remains to be done by the new or restored democracies to secure their democratic systems. Societies expect to find in democracy a solution to all of their problems, including those which would be difficult to solve under any system of government, in particular economic and social problems. If democratic institutions work ineffectively, are associated with corruption or impotence or are unable to resolve problems, a window is opened to authoritarian and totalitarian forces to weaken democracy.

Therefore, democracies must apply their greatest efforts to limiting the shadow side, from which no democracy is immune. It means that all members of society, irrespective of political affiliation, have a responsibility to put the collective interest before their own, to seek effective solutions to economic and social problems.

In this great Hall, in which so many representatives of States that gained their independence quite recently are present, we understand how important sovereignty is to every nation. To secure it we must overcome many obstacles. Clearly, Latvia cannot solve all its problems by itself and depends greatly on the involvement and support of the international community. Meanwhile, of course, no State can expect the international community to solve all of its problems.

We have deep appreciation for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and its office in Riga for their substantial assistance in the further development of the democratic institutions in Latvia. A priority of utmost importance would be to arrange specific financial and advisory support for countries of new or restored democracies, to help pave the road to a stable and socially balanced society.

In our opinion, the security of small States should be a central concern of this Organization, since at this time there does not exist a balance of power or agreement on goals between small States and their larger neighbours. The United Nations must ensure that the world economic environment is conducive to the growth of small States. All States should be able to participate in the formulation of macroeconomic policies.

Now that the cold war is over and the bipolarity of the world has ended, contradictions between the big Powers no longer constitute the main threat to peace and security in the world. The security of small States is gradually coming to the foreground. These States are particularly interested in strengthening the international security institutions and making the most effective use of them. In this context, we consider the opening of existing European and transatlantic security institutions to Central European and Baltic countries to be extremely important.

The building of the new European security architecture, which would help smaller nations, such as Latvia, feel more secure, should include: mutually supportive enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union, close cooperation between partners within the framework of the Partnership for Peace Programme, enhanced dialogue between Russia and NATO, and discussions and consultations in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on issues not directly dealt with by the European Union and NATO.

For the stability of our continent it is very important for countries to act in compliance with the norms set in OSCE documents, particularly in the Charter of Paris for a New Europe and the Code of Conduct adopted at the OSCE Summit in Budapest, and with existing arms control agreements, especially the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE).

Well-structured, effective, mutually independent and collaborative State institutions, an equitable political system, a harmonized legal system, overall security and economic prosperity all form the basis of a democratic State. By enhancing each of these elements separately, democracy as a whole is strengthened. We are convinced that given peace and time and a friendly, supportive international environment all of these aims will be achieved.

Mr. Ahmed (India): Democracy, in its multifaceted dimensions, has acquired the status of a global norm of governance. While it takes many diverse forms, depending on the specific characteristics of a society and the peculiar circumstances of a State, the essence of a democracy is respect for the will of the people. Consequently, it is only to be expected that, as an Organization whose Charter was drawn up in the name of the peoples of the United Nations, the United Nations system needs to extend unfailing support to the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored

democracies. My delegation is thus happy to be among the sponsors of the draft resolution contained in document A/50/L.19.

As the world's largest functioning democracy, India has an abiding commitment to the principles and practice of democracy. We stand firmly behind United Nations efforts in this area of activity and welcome the Secretary General's report contained in document A/50/332, detailing the contours of United Nations support in a wide spectrum of areas.

My delegation endorses the Secretary General's observation that

> "Democracy is not a model to be copied from certain States, but a goal to be attained by all peoples". *(A/50/332 and Corr. 1, para. 5)*

It is our firm belief that no prescriptive norms can be imposed on a society in the name of democratization. All efforts at strengthening the democratization process in the new or restored democracies should flow from the requests of the Governments of Member States and should be exerted and in the ways agreed to and accepted by the Governments of the States concerned.

As the will of the people is expressed in sovereign independent States through participation in electoral processes, my delegation notes with appreciation that the United Nations has responded to 77 of the 89 requests by Member States for electoral assistance. This process of support for the electoral process, in our view, needs to be encouraged. The United Nations must firmly and strongly discourage attempts by groups adopting violent means to thwart people's participation in electoral processes.

Mr. Kulla (Albania), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Electoral assistance, by its very nature, is of finite duration and should be based on the request of the State concerned. We welcome the observation of the Secretary General that United Nations electoral assistance is ultimately aimed at the creation of its own obsolescence.

While it is true that the breadth of the democratization process encompasses a broad spectrum of activities apart from electoral assistance, and may include institution-building, constitutional reforms and civic education, we would like to recall that General Assembly resolution 47/120 B, which dealt among other matters with post-conflict peace-building, is relevant in this regard. The principles which the General Assembly emphasized as the basis of a United Nations role in that resolution, in our considered view, also need to be adhered to, in the context of support of the United Nations system to the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies.

The United Nations agencies involved in the entire range of processes covered under this omnibus goal should ensure that their activities are carried out in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular the sovereign equality and political independence of States, territorial integrity, and non-intervention in matters that are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State. Further, it need not be reiterated that the request of the concerned Government is a *sine qua non* for a United Nations role.

Not only does the democratic process to be nurtured and consolidated require superstructural assistance from the United Nations system, but it is also essential for democracies to be supported in the achievement of their core economic and social goals. The challenge of democratization cannot be met by Governments alone, especially if assistance for economic development and poverty eradication is placed on the back burner by international agencies.

The long-term and sustained development of democracy as a goal to be assimilated and attained by all societies requires that the nascent and developing democracies fulfil their economic and social programmes. The Governments will, of necessity, play a primary role. However, at a time when global interdependence is an acknowledged fact, the international milieu also has to be responsive to their needs. Better terms of trade, enhanced access to markets, increased and stable investment flows, access to technology on a non-discriminatory basis and availability of increased overseas development assistance are needed to meet their critical requirements. It is therefore essential for the United Nations system also to focus on these issues in the context of its support to the democratization process.

India believes that democracy and transparent and accountable governance and administration in all sectors of society are indispensable foundations for the realization of social development. We acknowledge the interdependent and mutually reinforcing relationship between democracy and development. Democracy ensures that decisions are taken with the fullest participation of

those who will be affected. It ensures not only local self-governance but also participative self-governance.

Before I conclude, I would also like to mention that India has participated actively in the process of establishing, along with other like-minded countries, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance as an intergovernmental organization based in Stockholm. As one of the 14 founder members, India looks forward to participating in all its activities, aimed at promoting and advancing democracy, improving and consolidating electoral processes, strengthening and supporting national capacity to develop the full range of democratic instruments, and promoting transparency and accountability in the context of democratic development.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Spain, speaking on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Yáñez-Barnuevo (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania and Slovakia align themselves with the content of this statement.

During the last two decades, a process of democratization has brought sweeping changes in various regions of the world. Initiated in Southern Europe, in the mid-1970s, that process took hold subsequently in large parts of Asia, Latin America, Africa and Eastern Europe. Fittingly, the First International Conference of New or Restored Democracies took place in Manila in 1988, followed by the Second Conference in Managua in 1994. Bucharest will host the third such conference, reflecting the geography of the democratization that took place during the two decades.

Those conferences have provided an opportunity for a large number of countries to share their experiences and have underlined the genuine character of the quest they have undertaken for certain representative political structures and an increasing role for civil society. Irrespective of the differences in the economic and social development of their respective societies, or their tradition and experience in democratic institution-building, these countries share a common belief that democratization enhances the daily lives of their citizens.

All these countries are focusing on transition from authoritarian structures to more participatory societies; other countries, in addition, are undergoing the transition from State-directed to free market economies. Yet others are in transition from a situation of conflict to a process of national reconciliation. The context may also be different. The emergence of a process of democratization may take place in a context of post-conflict peace-building, or as part of efforts to improve the capacity of Governments for the creation of a suitable environment for the achievement of sustainable development.

Democracy is an essential element in the establishment of that environment. In the first place, it provides the only long-term basis for bringing competing social interests together in a way that minimizes the risks of internal conflicts. In addition, inasmuch as enhancing good governance and management practices is an essential condition for the success of any strategy for development, advancing the cause of political participation has a great impact on all aspects of development efforts. Democracy itself is an important measure for development. Democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

Societies lacking in democracy tend to mirror each other's problems. Often the absence of representative structures indicates the presence of deep social inequalities and the entrenchment of ruling elites, which perpetuates a vicious circle of poor governance and a lack of political accountability to the majority of the citizens. By providing for greater transparency and by establishing mechanisms for participation, democracy makes it more likely that national policies will reflect a broader range of social aspirations. Further, the existence of institutions that considerably reduce the uncertainties of political life strengthens the capacity of Governments to carry out their functions effectively.

Finally, the political empowerment of community structures and grass-roots organizations is a way of ensuring that, on the one hand, the citizenry is not excluded from the decision-making process and thus is less likely to look for violent ways of manifesting grievances, and that, on the other hand, its experiences are factored into, and reflected in, decisions taken in the area of development.

Let us not forget that societies, irrespective of their economic indicators, can be in transition in many other ways. Even in rich societies, people can be unemployed and politically or socially disenfranchised. Economic underdevelopment is not the only cause of the conflicts

that have been gnawing at the conscience of humanity in recent years.

Pluralism is essential to the transition to a democratic government, but in a larger sense — encompassing periodic elections, the accountability of public officials, a transparent public administration, an independent judiciary and a free press. A democratic culture requires a dynamic civil society. Social development must spring from society itself. In the common endeavour for democracy and development, Governments must ensure close cooperation with non-governmental organizations, private enterprises, trade unions and other social groups. Furthermore, the empowerment of women remains a major goal in this regard. As the Secretary-General has rightly pointed out, policies and institutions that suppress the real potential of half of the Earth's population must be reformed. The full empowerment and participation of women, on an equal basis and in all spheres of society, including in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of full equality, development and peace.

The Secretary-General outlines in his report (A/50/332) the ways in which the United Nations system has been assisting States, at their request, in their efforts to promote a democratic culture, provide electoral assistance and assist in the strengthening of institutions.

Some of those efforts are being exerted in the midst of conflict situations or in the context of reconstruction and peace-building. The promotion of democratization and sustainable human development is widely accepted as a prerequisite for countries to resume their progress and rebuild their capacity as soon as possible. Thus, the success of large peace-keeping or peace-building efforts hinges on the existence of a sound foundation for peace. Democratization has been, in one way or another, both the end and the means in the settlement of persistent conflicts in Cambodia, El Salvador, Mozambique or Haiti. Conversely, the lack of a long-term commitment to this objective on the part of national protagonists or the international community can undermine stability and reignite a conflict situation. The so-called oblivion syndrome has posed an ever-present risk to the consolidation of the various peace-making and democratization processes.

Similarly, the idea of the need to integrate and coordinate the efforts of the various agencies and departments in the aftermath of political settlements was borne out originally by experiences in Cambodia, El Salvador or Haiti.

A number of departments in the Secretariat and the specialized agencies are committed to efforts towards democratization, both at Headquarters and in the field. Consequently, one of the major themes running through the report of the Secretary-General is the enhancement of coordination within the United Nations system. At Headquarters, coordination can be adequately strengthened, as indicated by the Secretary-General, through the early involvement of all relevant sectors in the preparation of country-specific programmes by the agencies. In the field, improved inter-agency cooperation requires further strengthening of the Resident Coordinator system of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and additional measures recommended during the triennial policy review of operational activities for development, in order to ensure an efficient division of labour.

UNDP has played a key supportive role, in particular in strengthening institutions and infrastructures as well as in electoral assistance, in close cooperation with the Secretariat's Electoral Assistance Division. Through a variety of arrangements, and at the request of individual recipient countries, UNDP has supported the efforts of Governments to maximize the effectiveness of activities for development.

Also of great importance are the activities undertaken by the Centre for Human Rights in providing, with considerably fewer resources, technical assistance for the reform of legislation, the administration of justice and the strengthening of democratic institutions, including through the training of security forces.

The Electoral Assistance Division has done a commendable job of handling the increasing number of requests from Member States for electoral assistance, which by June this year had risen to a total of 89. With scant resources, it has conducted needs-assessment missions, provided technical assistance and carried out a variety of supporting and coordinating activities related to the observation and verification of electoral processes.

Also noteworthy are the efforts of the World Bank in fields such as the strengthening of infrastructures and civil-service reform, as well as its efforts to improve the accountability, transparency and quality of public-sector management. Other organizations, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Crime

Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch of the Secretariat, are actively engaged in the creation and strengthening of democratic structures of government and in the enhancement of the rule of law.

Coordination must also be fostered in the relationship between the United Nations system and regional organizations, such as the Organization of American States (OAS), the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as well as non-governmental organizations. As the Secretary-General points out and advocates, these and other protagonists are natural partners of both Governments and the Organization. This has been made abundantly clear not only as concerns electoral assistance but also and increasingly in other, equally important areas. More than 1,000 non-governmental organizations that enjoy consultative status with the United Nations, and many more without that status, are involved in these activities. Taken together, they can be considered as a network which complements that of the United Nations and whose development should be encouraged with a view to its effective use.

The European Union as a whole and its member States, nationally, are actively supporting activities related to democratization. Under the Treaty on European Union, the consolidation of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are identified as key objectives. Within this framework, the European Union is financing numerous projects in developing countries related to electoral assistance and freedom of expression, the strengthening of civil society and human rights education and training. Assistance in the field of democratization has also been provided to Central and Eastern European countries and the newly independent States. Recently the European Union and its member States have been among the leading supporters of the human rights operations in Rwanda and Burundi.

The Secretary-General has provided us with a thorough, thought-provoking account of what the United Nations system, in coordination with other actors, has been able to do. In sum, we would like to commend the United Nations for its successful efforts in this field. We agree with the Secretary-General on the need to promote sustainable development and democracy throughout the world. To achieve that goal, funds are needed, which means that the deterioration of the United Nations financial position must be reversed. The commitment in this regard must be equal to the challenge facing the Organization. We expect and encourage the Secretary-General to continue his consideration of ways in which the United Nations can rise to the challenge of supporting all the efforts aimed at the promotion of democratization and the consolidation of new or restored democracies.

Mr. Cassar (Malta): Malta associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Spain on behalf of the European Union.

United Nations support for the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies is of special significance as we commemorate the Organization's fiftieth anniversary. This topic takes us to the very heart of that which inspired so many of the authors of the Charter. During the recent Special Commemorative Meeting, our Heads of State and Government reaffirmed their commitment to those fundamental principles which originally animated the Organization and should guide its work in the future. The keystone on which the United Nations rests is the belief

> "in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small".

The past five years have witnessed momentous change, but they have also been fraught with political, social and economic upheavals. In Europe the storming of the Berlin Wall is both a beacon of hope for the future and a reminder of that tragic past when democracy was trampled upon and denied to millions.

The popular will to secure and consolidate democracy has determined a global transition. Authoritarian regimes worldwide have been forced to bow their heads to the will and expectations of peoples. Democratic governance has replaced imposition in places where such a turn of events was inconceivable only a few years ago.

Reflecting on those events as President of the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly, my Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Guido de Marco, stressed the impact of respect for or denial of human rights and fundamental freedoms on international behaviour; promotion of human rights should be intensified and be given the highest priority. He said

> "The removal of ideological warfare from international relations should usher in an era where

human dignity becomes the fulcrum around which our commitment evolves." *(A/45/PV.1, p. 13)*

The institution of democratic systems is a fragile and painful process. It requires sustenance. It certainly does not deserve complacency. The changed environment has thoroughly affected the work of this Organization. Passivity, which often prevailed when crises threatened or undermined democracy, has been replaced by a reinvigorated United Nations commitment to act in a proactive manner. This qualitative change is having a decisive impact. United Nations assistance in institution-building and election processes has proved crucial in many new and emerging democracies.

Democracy enhances civil society through participation. Competing interests consolidate pluralism. Freedom of the media, independence of the judiciary, rule of law, free and fair periodic elections, accountability and transparency are basic requirements for democratic societies. Equally important in ensuring stability is a social environment which enhances and promotes the dignity which is the inherent and inalienable right of all human beings.

Lack of resources and development are not to be a pretext for Governments to restrict or stifle human rights and fundamental freedoms. But by their very nature, poverty, misery and want trample upon human dignity. This is why the call for solidarity by the developing world should never go unheeded. Need generates tension and carries the potential for strife, with consequences which are unfathomable. The challenges which face the new and emerging democracies are multiple. Pluralism is dependent on the consolidation of tolerance and freedom of opinion. The instances when the aspirations of those who struggled for liberty have been thwarted by acts or waves of political or ethnic intolerance are disquieting.

The heritage of ideologies which ruled through imposition is another, but not the only, threat which the new democracies face. Networks which operate in international drug trafficking, terrorism, illegal arms and the transfer of nuclear materials not only exploit, but often create for themselves enclaves of vulnerability.

The assistance provided by the United Nations must necessarily take into account all these areas. Efforts to develop and promote early-warning mechanisms, preventive diplomacy, peace-keeping and post-conflict peace-building are formidable and deserve praise and support. But they are not the only areas that contribute towards the long-term enhancement and enjoyment of democratic rule. Institution-building and capacity-building assistance which is multiform is comprehensive and long-lasting.

The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) recognized from its inception the inseparable link between security, human rights and economic cooperation. These are the three pillars which helped the Conference survive the throes of the cold war.

Today the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as successor of the Conference, continues to consolidate its work in all three fields. Undoubtedly, the work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in granting assistance in the diverse areas relating to the holding and monitoring of elections is of key importance, as are its missions to areas of tension.

Equally incisive on developments in Europe is the sterling work undertaken by the Council of Europe. That bastion of human rights during the cold war is today sharing its experience and expertise with its new and extended membership in an on-going experiment in multinational democracy which is as unique as it is diverse in the areas in which is operates.

One cannot but underline, at this point, the impact which the European Union's resolve to translate words into deeds has had on the consolidation of democracy, not only in Europe but also in other regions. The continued engagement of the Union in the sponsorship of programmes in the fields of social and economic development is as important to the buttressing of democracy as are its aid programmes in education, health and institution-building.

The Maltese people have always been conscious of the need to preserve and protect democracy. We have defended our democratic convictions when endangered. Such principles are worth safeguarding. Today we are reaping the fruit. Our experience bears witness to the benefits of tolerance and freedom as these are reflected in the steady pace of political, social and economic development.

The Managua Declaration and Plan of Action provide a constant guideline in support of Governments for the promotion and consolidation of new or restored democracies. Malta looks forward to the convening of a Third International Conference on New or Restored

Democracies, to take place in 1996 in Bucharest. Doubtless the people of Romania, who liberated themselves from totalitarian rule with so much pain, will have much to contribute to the constructive dialogue on the problems and challenges to the new and emerging democracies.

Democracy guarantees the observance of fundamental human rights. It is built on the recognition of the dignity of each member of society and imposes a social responsibility. Democracy should remain our greatest legacy for future generations.

Mr. Erdös (Hungary) *(interpretation from French)*: I am speaking as a sponsor of draft resolution A/50/L.19 entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies" and also to express Hungary's agreement with the statement by the representative of Spain on behalf of the European Union.

The great political earthquakes which shook the bipolar world have buried it under the debris of totalitarian and authoritarian systems. Today, democracy reigns in a number of countries which, it is true, have different approaches and whose conditions vary considerably. What binds them together, none the less, is a faith in democratic values, and in the pre-eminence and effectiveness of representative democracy as a system of government.

In the United Nations, there is a notable gap in this regard, namely that the word "democracy" does not even appear in the text of the Charter, so that our basic document contains no reference to this concept. This shows how far we have come since the creation of our world Organization.

Now that the euphoria resulting from the major changes is behind us, we now face the unprecedented and singularly difficult challenges of political and economic transformation in countries which have chosen to become, or become once again, democratic. The Managua Declaration adopted at the conclusion of the Second International Conference of New or Restored Democracies in 1994 refers, quite rightly, to the obstacles facing those countries. It would be a mistake to assume that there is an automatic link between the dawning of an era of democracy and the success of the democratic enterprise. The path leading to the triumph of democracy in practice is fraught with many difficulties and dangerous traps. International conferences on these issues, including the conference to be held in Bucharest, are an opportunity for exchanging both positive and negative experiences on these issues amongst a growing number of countries.

The report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/50/332 focuses essentially on ways and means for the United Nations to provide multifaceted assistance to the efforts of Governments in that sphere. Such assistance should be placed in the very complex everyday context of those countries which are in the process of ridding themselves of a heavy political, social and economic legacy. All the activities that constitute this support from the United Nations — the promotion of a democratic culture, involvement in assisting the electoral process and the creation of democratic institutions — are taking place in the very specific circumstances of the various countries, and they are either facilitated or, made more difficult depending on the particular situation.

The observations and recommendations made in the report shed light on the real dimensions of this task by highlighting the impossibility for the United Nations or for Governments in today's world to face the challenge of democratization alone. We would therefore have thought it desirable to give further emphasis to the importance of regional organizations, given the many partners involved, in efforts to advance the values and ideals of democracy. Regional organizations have a primordial role to play in applying the purposes and principles of the Charter to a specific region, taking into account the region's distinctive conditions.

One cannot forget that the historic changes of a few years ago — those changes which finally, once and for all, sealed the fate of totalitarianism — actually took place along a line of confrontation which kept Europe and the entire world divided into two opposing ideological and military camps for several decades. It was the collapse of that physical and psychological separating wall that was the decisive and determining moment in that process of change.

In retrospect we must recognize the historic merits of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), which in its time provoked processes within the closed societies in the eastern part of the old continent which contributed greatly to the disappearance of the totalitarian systems and to the colossal changes enacted in those societies. Anyone who is at all familiar with the recent history of that part of Europe will recall the impact which the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 had on the human rights and democratic rights situation and the rule of law in the States of Eastern Europe.

Movements and individuals who dedicated themselves to the struggle for democracy, human rights and basic freedoms drew inspiration from the documents of CSCE which, in turn, gave legitimacy to intergovernmental public debate on human rights problems and humanitarian issues and thereby gave encouragement and protection to those organizations, groups of individuals and citizens.

Today, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, which has become the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) — a regional arrangement in the sense of Chapter VIII of the Charter — brings together 54 countries, stretching from Kamtchatka to Alaska, which have subscribed to the documents of the Organization and which thereby proclaim their commitment to the democratic values that underlie the OSCE's activities.

The OSCE, which has been able to adapt to today's radically different circumstances, nevertheless warns us, in the Declaration adopted at the Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Budapest last December, against taking a simplistic view of what remains to be done. The document emphasizes that the path to stable democracy, an efficient market economy and social justice is a hard one. The document recalls that the spread of freedoms has been accompanied by new conflicts and the revival of old ones, that human rights are still being flouted, that intolerance persists and discrimination against minorities is still practised. The document points out that the plagues of aggressive nationalism, racism, chauvinism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and ethnic tension are still widespread, and that, along with social and economic instability, they are among the main sources of crisis, loss of life and of human misery. This is compounded, according to the document, by the threat of terrorism that haunts our societies. The Summit document reconfirms the determination of the OSCE to combat terrorism and its commitment to enhanced cooperation to eliminate this threat to security, democracy and human rights.

Following this decision taken at the highest level, OSCE has committed itself to broadening its multidimensional activities in conflict situations within the OSCE region. In so doing it is guided by its global concept of security and its indivisibility, a concept which, above and beyond the security aspect, also has economic, social and humanitarian aspects. Respect for democracy and the rule of law represents an essential component of OSCE activities with regard to security and cooperation, and it must remain a primary objective.

For several years there has already existed within the organization an appropriate body through which it can better meet the requirements of our times. The office for democratic institutions and human rights, whose headquarters are in Warsaw, will henceforth have greater resources, pursuant to the decisions of the OSCE Summit, and will continue to help participating States, in particular those in transition.

There are approximately 20 countries in the OSCE region — with, to be sure, very specific situations, ranging from the shores of the Baltic Sea to the mountains of Central Asia — which belong to this category of States in transition. In other words, these are countries which recently have chosen, in different ways, to establish or restore democracy and which are making progress — with varying degrees of success, we must admit — from totalitarianism to democracy. The OSCE missions which are present in a large number of areas of the region are, among other things, actively promoting the rule of law, without which we could not credibly envisage the settlement of conflicts, mostly internal ones, which are causing upheavals in a number of these countries.

In this context, one of the greatest challenges facing the OSCE is its participation in the implementation of a future agreement on the settlement of the crisis in the former Yugoslavia, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Croatia. The specific contribution which the OSCE can make to this broad-based operation, in the light of the experience it has already gained, includes the creation or restoration of democratic institutions, assistance in the return of refugees and displaced persons, verification of respect for human rights, including the rights of minorities, and electoral assistance. This contribution of the OSCE will also include measures to be taken in arms control and disarmament, as well as in the post-conflict process of economic and social recovery.

In conclusion, we believe that the main message of the draft resolution submitted to this Assembly is that the United Nations must continue its action for democratization now under way in a large number of countries in Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa. This action is absolutely necessary because there is an indissoluble link between the flourishing of democracy, on the one hand, and stability and security in specific countries and in entire regions, on the other. In this regard, we believe that the fundamental relationship that exists between peace, development and democracy should be better highlighted in our world Organization.

Regarding the governmental level, where we will find the major protagonists for the action envisaged by draft resolution A/50/L.19, the United Nations and its regional organizations, as well as other multilateral institutions, must stand ready to support and sustain, in the most appropriate manner, the efforts — not always easily exerted — of Governments to achieve the democratic development of their countries.

Mr. Gorita (Romania): Last year, Romania wholeheartedly welcomed the inclusion in the agenda of the General Assembly of the new item entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies". The attempt to assess this rather new dimension of the work of the United Nations was successful.

Proof of this is not only the unanimous approval of the first resolution ever adopted on such a matter, but also the increasing interest of Member States in this topic. During the general debate of the present session and the Special Commemorative Meeting, numerous delegations offered their views on the importance and impact of their democratization efforts and shared their national experiences. In the same context, the excellent report of the Secretary-General (A/50/332) provides useful conceptual clarifications and sheds more light on the actual achievements of the United Nations system in this field. We are convinced that this is just a beginning and that the Secretary-General, in concert with Member States, non-governmental organizations and other international protagonists, will find new ideas and more avenues to explore.

The representative of Spain delivered a comprehensive statement on behalf of the European Union and Associated States, including Romania. My delegation fully subscribes to the contents of that statement. I would like to add a few comments of particular interest to my Government.

My delegation sincerely believes that the support by our universal Organization of the promotion and consolidation of democracy is useful and timely and deserves special attention — for a number of reasons.

First, the growing trend towards democracy, political pluralism and the rule of law favours a genuine exercise of the sovereignty of peoples, respect and protection of human rights, and the fostering of a social environment aimed at the adequate human development of individuals and nations.

Secondly, the economic and social development of nations can best be achieved by democracy on the basis of participation and consultation of the people in the process of governing. It provides lines of accountability and permanent control over the performance of Governments for the benefit of the whole society.

Thirdly, a powerful and active civil society is essential to maintain a proper democratic government, to correct any tendency towards abuses of power, to promote and ensure pluralism, civil liberties and opportunities for all.

Fourthly, democracy offers the means to permanently seek good governance — one more responsive to the challenges of economic and social developments and to the needs of the governed. Democracy is not utopia, but it has proved itself able to produce tangible results.

Fifthly, sharing democratic values is of crucial importance for the political, economic and social processes in national societies, as well as for international peace and security.

It seems to us that democracy is not a dogma, but an open, dynamic and self-perfectible system. Democracy in itself means profound diversity and variety of expression. When we consider the "geography of democratization", as the European Union put it, we notice how specific the needs and the priorities of each society can be.

At the same time, we are aware that effective democracy should lead to the real development and prosperity of the peoples that democracy is supposed to serve. Likewise, development without democracy is impaired if it benefits only a few of the elites. That is why the assertion that democracy, development and respect for human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing is so valid. Their harmonization naturally implies a positive impact on international peace and security and on our society of nations. In this light, an active and stimulating role of the United Nations once again appears welcome.

With all its merits, consistent progress in democratization cannot be taken for granted. Democracy-making is a painful process which may not be irreversible if it is not backed continuously. Here again, the United Nations, faithful to the sacred spirit of the Charter, is expected to voice its moral support and to

give its concrete assistance. The aim of the draft resolution before us is merely to confirm this need, and we hope it will be approved by consensus.

Finally, since Romania will host the next International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, I would like to assure the Assembly that my Government will do its utmost to make this meeting a politically significant event. In order to achieve this, we shall rely on the support of and ideas from any interested Member States. We believe that the Conference in Bucharest will be, indeed, a new and valuable opportunity for a broad exchange of views on such a topical issue. We are confident that it will add substantial value to the debate in, and action by, the United Nations system.

Mr. Dlamini (Swaziland): My delegation welcomes the opportunity to address this Assembly on the agenda item entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies". This discussion is taking place at a time when peace is an essential commodity in the world. The agenda item urges the United Nations to support efforts by Member States in the quest for restoration and consolidation of democracy. To that end, In doing so, my delegation wishes to appeal to the United Nations to continue instilling a sense of respect for the sovereignty of States, so that there is continued appreciation of the different approaches to democracy.

The Kingdom of Swaziland could not remain untouched by the wind of democratic dispensation which started blowing in the early 1990s. Our approach, however, was determined by the entire Swazi nation, which made its contributions at various grass-root forums. The Swazi nation agreed that it preferred the type of democracy that is homegrown and reflective of its culture and national circumstances. To this end, I am gratified to inform the Assembly that our unique way of democracy has received popular support from the international community, including world capitals, from which financial assistance for our democracy is still pouring in today.

May I, at this juncture, briefly describe how we elect our parliamentary representatives. Our system is divided into primary and secondary stages. From the primary stage, the system affords all the cross-sections of our populace an opportunity to nominate an electoral candidate. This takes place in each and every chiefdom. This procedure is inclusive of all registered voters — as opposed to the party system, whereby the executive decides on behalf of the entire nation on the nomination of candidates. This primary stage is followed by the secondary stage, whereby parliamentary representatives are elected through the direct and secret ballot.

Our unique system is reflective of the key variables and characteristics of democracy, such as election through secret ballot, voters' roll, transparency and accountability to the electorate. In all these efforts, we shall continue to enlist the support of the United Nations and that of developed Member States. I hasten to say that the United Nations has, through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Office in Swaziland, lived up to the letter of this agenda item by providing financial assistance during our last general elections.

Having said all this, my delegation wishes to appeal to the Members of the United Nations to appreciate the manner in which States such as the Kingdom of Swaziland approach the issue of democracy. In doing so, we shall be able to emulate what is good in other States and to incorporate it in our respective political situations. This may, further, make it possible to realize that democracy cannot be imported from certain quarters of the globe, but, rather, is an internal evolutionary process reflective of national experiences and cultures.

We, the developing nations, have been unfortunate for too long. After the end of the Second World War, in 1945, political ideologies were introduced and imposed on us by those countries that found them fit for their national prestige and glory. What subsequently happened to those ideologies should be sending the clear message to us, especially the developing nations, that any democracy founded on foreign principles ends in a fiasco, thus resulting in national crises and confusion.

The Kingdom of Swaziland believes that all democracies, regardless of where they originate, are in pursuit of a very persuasive ideal: democracy. Many wars — national and regional — are waged in the name and defence of democracy. Perhaps I may venture here to illustrate the kind of democracy generally needed by the people: an autochthonous system, the desire to see the system enjoy popular participation, and participation through elected representatives.

The idea of direct participation was first introduced by the Greek city-States. I have no doubt that such a system must have been in the formative stages of participation in matters of government and was a process of development that was to result in the concept of representativity in Greece. However, I wish to emphasize

at this point that other parts of the world took different approaches to democracy, and that the Greeks did not, and could never, punish those nations for innovations of democracy. Instead, they were prepared to learn from these innovations. Even the oldest types of democracy, which have undergone some trials, cannot, in our view, be world models.

Different methods of acquiring parliamentary representation have been adopted by various nations. These have proved to work well if they are reflective of national circumstances, which are the essential building blocks of true democracy. In some cases, there are single-party methods; in others, there is multi-party democracy; in yet others, there are no parties at all. Democracy can therefore be regarded as the vehicle that conveys commodities to the people.

In some States, a government is appointed by the Head of State; it is not chosen from among elected parliamentary representatives. Here again, this can work well subject to the constitution and to national circumstances.

In the light of everything that I have said, it becomes clear that the United Nations has a duty to encourage Member States to respect other nations' approaches to the principle of democracy. Therefore, it remains the responsibility of the United Nations to discourage certain States from being armchair critics without appreciating the attendant national circumstances. So serious is the situation that certain developed countries withhold their financial assistance for development under the pretext that the developing nations fall short of the yardstick of democracy as perceived by those developed countries.

In conclusion, let it be put on record that through a continued sharing of ideas and experiences the principle of democracy will continue to thrive and to sustain the new or restored democracies until they attain a stage of maturity.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.